

ALBUM REVIEWS



**Asking for Trouble
With Strings**
Caity Gyorgy (La Reserve)
by Jim Motavalli

Caity Gyorgy (pronounced “George”) is a young jazz singer from Canada and multiple JUNO Awards winner, and if singing was all she did the critics would still be raving about her clear articulation (even at manic tempos), scat abilities and relentless swing. But Gyorgy is also a songwriter of note, with the rare talent of composing tunes that fit neatly into the Great American Songbook mold. She works closely with pianist Mark Limacher, who plays on the singer’s *Asking for Trouble*, a lovely duo recording of Frank Loesser songs, and additionally arranged and conducted the orchestra on *With Strings*. Like Gyorgy, he is also a songwriter and music composer.

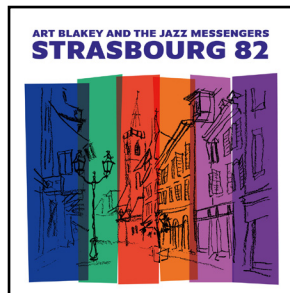
On *Asking for Trouble*, the two showcase their tight musical connection formed through their long collaboration. The singer’s choices venture beyond the hits, beginning with the title song (sung by the composer himself on an album of rare and unreleased material, *Frank Sings Loesser*). In “I Believe in You” (*How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*), Gyorgy’s signature seizure of a single word—in this case “believe”—stretches it out to bravura length. “Paris Original”, from the same show, is a delightful find, especially from a clothes horse like Gyorgy. “I Come a Runnin’” has a fine stride solo from Limacher, and the singer swings it with a Broadway touch. The much-covered “If I Were a Bell” (*Guys and Dolls*) is taken fast, with engaging scat, and Limacher is right there ringing the bell with her.

The singer’s *With Strings* is in a long tradition for which Billie Holiday’s *Lady in Satin* is an effective template. Gyorgy isn’t coming from Holiday’s hard life, but she’s versatile enough to go from duos to full orchestration without getting buried in Limacher’s quite busy arrangements. And the program is all her own songs. “Pour for the Hour” and “That Doesn’t Matter” are enhanced by the large band. “You’ll Learn” is a poignant give-it-time ballad with lush *South Pacific*-like strings that get a little intrusive at times. In this case, a more minimalist treatment may have been a more successful approach. “Train Wrecked Dining Car” (full of vivid imagery about facing your fears) fares better, recalling pianist-arranger Pete Rugolo’s work with June Christy. “If I’d’ve Known” has a long intro, akin to a Broadway musical overture. The fear is still there, but it’s fitted with an indelible melody and truth-telling wisdom that could make it a songbook standard. “Sight to Behold” belongs on stage somewhere, and a musical’s book could be written around it. “I’ve Been Kicking Myself”, meanwhile, would fit right into a Doris Day-Rock Hudson flick: *Pillow Talk* maybe. While *With Strings* isn’t really a “jazz” album per se, it’s very enjoyable nonetheless, and Gyorgy is emerging as a singer-songwriter double threat.

At a recent concert at Dizzy’s Club in June, Gyorgy showcased her clear voice, with a firm low range and echoes of Stacey Kent. Her all-Canadian trio—with Limacher (who proved live to be a pianist with an unabashed affection for older styles including Fats Waller stride), Thomas Hainbuch (bass) and Curtis Nowosad (drums)—performed a nicely-paced set enlivened by the leader’s cheerful patter. Her “Hello, How Are You?” reinforced the vocalist’s considerable songwriter credentials, as did “Pour for the Hour” (about serving tea and the breaking up of old friendships) and “Nothing Today” (with memorable lyrics describing a

dreary day with no mail). She also scatted with Ella-like abandon, often slamming in and out of lyrics with a fondness for rapid tempo shifts in her treatment of standards. Equally impressive on slow ballads, the 1953 Broadway musical *Kismet* is a Gyorgy favorite, from which she offered a medley that included “Stranger in Paradise” and “Baubles, Bangles and Beads”. The latter is frequently jazzed up, but she somehow managed to get the former up and moving, too.

For more info visit lareserverecords.com. Gyorgy is at Hudson Hall (Hudson, NY) Oct. 4 (part of Hudson Jazz Festival). See 100 Miles Out.



Strasbourg 82
Art Blakey & the Jazz Messengers (Gearbox)
by Ken Dryden

Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers was the ultimate graduate school for numerous young musicians over several decades to develop as composers, arrangers, soloists and leaders. The drummer-bandleader (whose 106th birthday and 35-year deathaversary fall on this month) would appoint a senior member as music director and push the band to not only interpret the group’s classic repertoire, but to also write new material to add to the band’s book. After a few years, if they didn’t leave on their own, musicians were pushed out and encouraged to find their own path. The lineup heard on this previously unissued 1982 concert (available as a 180gr double-LP, as well as CD and digital album), recorded in Strasbourg, France, was together from around 1980-82: Donald Harrison (alto), Billy Pierce (tenor), Terence Blanchard (trumpet), Johnny O’Neal (piano) and Charles Fambrough (bass), all of whom would go on to record as leaders. The set list includes compositions of both previous and current Jazz Messengers, standards and arrangements of classic jazz works.

Fambrough’s “Little Man”, the only work penned by a then-current member of the band heard in this concert, opens the show by establishing a bluesy vamp with Blakey’s off-center drumming propelling the sextet. Famed (though shortly tenured) Messengers alum, tenor saxophonist Benny Golson’s wistful “Along Came Betty” is highlighted by Pierce’s rapid-fire, passionate tenor. Another former Jazz Messenger, Bobby Watson penned “Fuller Love” (later retitled “In Case You Missed It”), a circular, tension-building vehicle showcasing Blanchard, Pierce, Harrison and O’Neal in turn, all feeding off each other and leading to an explosive climax. Ron Carter’s “Eighty One” (originally from Miles Davis’ *ESP* album) is given a hip Latin vibe, with Fambrough’s bass laying a solid foundation for Harrison’s fiery alto and Pierce’s soulful tenor.

Blakey was insistent about properly pacing a set and the ballad feature of “I Can’t Get Started” gives the listener (and musicians undoubtedly) a chance to cool down. Featured is an extended solo by Harrison, with Blanchard and Pierce both laying out. The drummer kicks off Donald Brown’s “New York” with a masterful solo introduction, as the band captures the high energy and diversity of the metropolis in the former Jazz Messenger pianist’s lesser known masterpiece. Another ballad is a solo piano feature for O’Neal, giving the full band a breather and capturing the work’s nostalgic mood. It also adds plenty of the pianist’s trademark flourishes without going overboard. Blakey then fires up his band again with Golson’s long-time

Jazz Messengers staple “Blues March”, leading into a driving, piercing interpretation of Bobby Timmons’ soulful signature tune “Moanin’”.

For more info visit gearboxrecords.com



Triune
Nicolas Payton (Smoke Sessions)
by Jeff Cebulski

One musician raised on New Orleans-jazz roots, but who has embraced the Black American Music (BAM) identity, is Nicolas Payton. The trumpeter-keyboardist’s new album, *Triune*, celebrates the culture’s musical gumbo, pairing the veteran with two equally distinctive musicians—esperanza spalding (bass, vocals) and Karriem Riggins (drums). Though this trio configuration is not altogether new (spalding and Riggins were members of a 2010 Payton quartet), it took until now for these stars to realign and record.

Triune finds each musician, pulled together by the strength of their skills, at a high point and creative peak. Overall, the vibe is breezy, soulful and softly swinging, while incorporating Payton’s appreciation for what has come before. And in the same way that spalding began as a bassist but has since been recognized additionally

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

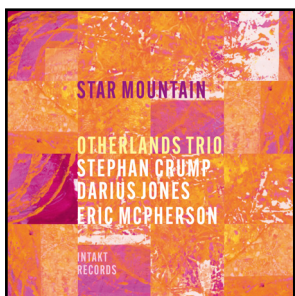
- JD Allen—*Love Letters (The Ballad Sessions)* (Savant)
- Camille Bertault—*Voz e Vocês (Sunnyside)*
- Michael Carvin Experience—*Live in San Francisco* (MCE Music)
- Vincent Davis, Ari Brown, Edward Wilkerson Jr., Preyas Roy—*The Katalyst Conversation (Live in Brussels)* (Katalyst Entertainment)
- Michael Dease—*Flow* (Posi-Tone)
- Orhan Demir/Neil Swainson—*Wicked Demon* (Hittite)
- Extraordinary Popular Delusions—*The Last Quintet* (Corbett vs. Dempsey)
- Tomas Fujiwara—*Dream Up* (Out Of Your Head)
- Hold the Lion’s Paw—*Potentially Interesting Jazz Music* (Earshift Music)
- Irving Flores Afro-Cuban Jazz Sextet—*Armando Mi Conga* (Amor de Flores)
- Sylvain Kassap, Steve Swell, Benjamin Duboc, Chad Taylor—*Edges* (RogueArt)
- Yael “KAT” Modiano/David Haney—*Improvised Music from Luray Caverns* (Cadence Media)
- Yusuf Mumin—*Journey to the Ancient* (Wewantsounds)
- Natural Information Society—*Perseverance Flow* (Eremite)
- Pharoah Sanders—*The Complete Theresa Recordings* (Mosaic)
- Wadada Leo Smith/Sylvie Courvoisier—*Angel Falls* (Intakt)
- Natsuki Tamura/Satoko Fujii—*Ki* (Libra)
- John Taylor—*Tramonto* (ECM)
- Underground Horns—*Live at Nublu* (s/r)
- Nicole Zuraitis—*Live at Vic’s* (La Reserve)

as a delightful singer, Payton, who first gained attention on trumpet and flugelhorn, is featured primarily as a keyboardist and arranger, with his horn sprinkled on four of this album's seven pieces. Riggins remains a versatile percussive drummer, supporting conventional and postmodern music alike, with aplomb.

Jazz elements persist: occasionally, Payton, Sonny Rollins-like, will drop quotes from known songs, on both piano and trumpet. The heft of spalding's bass lines, the intricate stickwork of Riggins and the leader's swing stand out, while the assortment of styles attests to the BAM doctrine of mixing popular motifs with intracultural expression. Tributes also rule: the album is bookended by pieces composed by the late pianist Geri Allen, whose music Payton has addressed before. The first, "Unconditional Love", matches the original's languid pace but adds spalding's lilting wordless vocal. The final cut, "Feed the Fire" (a "bonus" track), which electrifies Allen's version with Payton's fuzzy Fender Rhodes leading the charge, sounds like a demo that may promise a more animated trio repeat. A nod to the late Sly Stone occurs on the gospel-funk "#bamisforthechildren", which features a chorus including New Orleans friends Ivan Neville, Erica Falls and Otis McDonald. The remaining selections are all Payton compositions, a few of them repeats: "Ultraviolet", featuring a vocal from Snarky Puppy's Nikki Glaspie; a bouncy, spalding-scatted "Jazz Is a Four-Letter Word" with significant swing; and "Gold Dust Black Magic", a Brazilian-tinged ditty with a spalding-Payton wordless voice duet.

On *Triune*, Nicholas Payton and friends provide a harmonious aside and hat-tip to the broad, contemporary sounds created in the Black milieu, while highlighting his cohorts' extraordinary skills, opening a door to cross-generational appreciation.

For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.com. Payton is at Smoke Oct. 1-5. See Calendar.



Star Mountain
Otherlands Trio (Stephan Crump, Darius Jones,
Eric McPherson) (Intakt)
by David Cristol

This debut album, *Star Mountain*, by the Otherlands Trio, was born of another, the Borderlands Trio, with pianist Kris Davis, bassist Stephan Crump and drummer Eric McPherson. Crump and McPherson wished to continue their collaboration and so reconvened without their pianist, thus forming the Otherlands Trio with alto saxophonist Darius Jones. Both the bassist and drummer have appeared in small formats on several other albums on the Swiss Intakt label, including Borderlands Trio's three albums, as well as with Mary Halvorson, Ingrid Laubrock, Cory Smythe, David Virelles and Ohad Talmor.

This new trio signals Jones' first appearance on the label and a rare outing outside his own projects. His skewed melodic lines, insubordinate swirls, peremptory and sometimes hoarse sound, free yet compendious playing, aren't this release's only merit. McPherson is also a joy to listen to, never predictable, establishing rhythms only to deconstruct them with the help of his more subdued but unwavering bass accomplice. The spontaneously-created compositions (two long tracks encircling three shorter ones) are credited to all three members and offer original angles

aplenty. The recording is pristine, allowing the listener to appreciate each member's ideas, interactions and changes of pace. The ultimate result, however, feels like the debut that it is—three musicians sizing each other up, working things out between them. It's a cautious approach, without the urgency of Jones' works under his own name or the whole-hearted stretches into the unknown that made the Borderlands Trio so valuable, live and on record. Consequently, the 46 minutes of *Star Mountain* feel too short, leaving this listener longing for more. There's much potential for development, especially of the abstract and textural parts such as the penultimate "Instared" (a mere interlude) or the ending of closer "Imago". Looking forward to the next volume.

For more info visit intaktrec.ch. The album release concert is at The Jazz Gallery Oct. 17. See Calendar.



Live at Nublu
Underground Horns (s/r)
by Elijah Shiffer

As New York's brass band scene has proliferated exponentially over the past decade or so, it has consistently produced some of the most exciting live performance environments the city has to offer. Hearing a band live will never be the same as experiencing it on record, but as shown on *Live at Nublu* by the Underground Horns, proper documentation of a particularly electrifying gig can preserve a high percentage of its magic. Though this album cannot literally replicate the crowded festivities of a brass band show, it comes extremely close.

The New York brass band sound is both instantly recognizable and difficult to describe precisely. It incorporates a vast range of like-minded influences from across space and time, including Ethiopian jazz, Afro-Cuban salsa, New Orleans funk, swing and even the "space jazz" of Sun Ra; all of these genres are essayed characterfully by the Underground Horns. Led by alto saxophonist Welf Dorr, the core group also includes Patrick Adams (trumpet), Justus Heher (trombone), Evan Jaffa (sousaphone), Clemens Grassmann (drums) and Michael Glanzer (percussion). On three of the seven tracks, the ensemble is doubled in size with an expanded version of the Dingonek Street Band, a like-minded group whose stylistic range is similarly omnivorous.

Dorr's clever sextet arrangements (all his own compositions) sound just as big as the larger ones. "The Alchemist" and "Tatato" are the most interesting of these with their slippery, inventive melodies; on the latter, the leader's multiphonics add a quirky avant garde spice to the ensemble sound. Rebirth Brass Band classic "Feel Like Funkin' It Up" showcases soloists from both Underground Horns and Dingonek, including the latter's three trumpeters, with a particularly salacious statement by Thomas Abercrombie.

Live at Nublu is not an album for passive listening; this is music to feel with one's whole body. On every song, the groove makes dancing inevitable. Like the best live shows, this album is guaranteed to stick with the listener for a long time—even after just the first hearing.

For more info visit undergroundhorns.com. The album release concert is at Nublu Oct. 1. See Calendar.

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UPCOMING SHOWS

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- EP. 1** OCT. WED 1 - THU 2
ROBERT GLASPER
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- EP. 3** OCT. WED 8 - THU 9 - FRI 10
ROBERT GLASPER x **EMILY KING**
- EP. 4** OCT. SAT 11 - SUN 12
ROBERT GLASPER x **SURPRISE GUEST**
- EP. 5/6** OCT. WED 15 - THU 16 - FRI 17 - SAT 18 - SUN 19
ROBERT GLASPER **20TH ANNIVERSARY**
OG ACOUSTIC PIANO TRIO x **MARK TURNER** (ONLY SUN 19)
- EP. 7** OCT. WED 22 - THU 23 - FRI 24
ROBERT GLASPER - CHRIS DAVE - DERRICK HODGE
ISAIAH SHARKEY - JAH! SUNDANCE x **BILAL**
- EP. 8** OCT. SAT 25 - SUN 26
R+R=NOW // ROBERT GLASPER - TERRACE MARTIN
DERRICK HODGE - JUSTIN TYSON - TAYLOR MCFERRIN
- EP. 9** OCT. WED 29 - THU 30
ROBERT GLASPER - BURNISS TRAVIS
JUSTIN TYSON - JOE HARLEY
JAH! SUNDANCE x **LEDISI** CELEBRATING
THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDCARD
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